

Elders Defined

Scripture:

1 Timothy 3:1 “It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do.”

Introduction:

Vision of Cedarloo Church

Looking into the future, we envision the Cedarloo Church as a body of believers that...

1. Is committed to a belief in God, His Son, the Holy Spirit the inspired Word, and the Church with Christ as its head. These are the foundations that bind us together in a family that loves God and one another.
2. Is excited and eager to worship, fellowship, and encourage one another.
3. Is compelled to grow spiritually through daily study of the word, meditation, and prayer thus transforming our lives to be more like Jesus.
4. Seeks to spread the gospel throughout our community, and the world, in order to seek the lost.
5. Puts forth the time and special efforts to strengthen our families.
6. Supports an active youth program.
7. Is denying self in order to serve God and others by being involved in the work of the church, contributing to the over all success of the gospel.
8. Welcomes new members and visitors into our church family by encouragement and fellowship.
9. Provides assistance for each member to gain and develop the foundations for their faith.

Transitional Statement:

To accomplish this vision we will have to put our focus on God and have godly leaders who will gently lead us in the paths of righteousness and help us stay the course and grow spiritually.

I. Let's begin this study by thinking about the structure of the church

A. First of all God describes the church as a body with many different parts.

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-26

12 For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.

14 For the body is not one member, but many. 15 If the foot says, "Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear says, "Because I am not an eye, I am not a part of the body," it is not for this reason any the less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired. 19 If they were all one member, where would the body be? 20 But now there are many members, but one body. 21 And the eye cannot say to the hand, "I have no need of you"; or again the head to the feet, "I have no need of you." 22 On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary; 23 and those members of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable, 24 whereas our more presentable members have no need of it. But God has so composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that member which lacked, 25 so that there may be no division in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. 26 And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

1. Some folks are:

- a. Bible school teachers
- b. Building cleaners
- c. Encouragers
- d. Power point projectionists
- e. Lord supper preparers.....some are those that clean up afterwards.
- f. Some bake bread for visitors etc.

2. In verse 18 the NIV says that God has arranged the parts

- 1) The great thing here is that God can see and understand the whole picture.
 - a) Where we have limited vision at best.
- 2) So God knows our strengths and weaknesses and places us in the Lords body according to the working of His will and purpose.

B. But the place for us to really get started is to simply understand that the head is Christ

1. Colossians 1:18

18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything.

2. Ephesians 1:22-23

22 And He (God) put all things in subjection under His feet, and gave Him as head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

a. Christ is over all things

1) Which means that all of us, no matter what part of the body, are in subjection to Christ.

3. Colossians 1:15-20

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities — all things have been created through Him and for Him. 17 He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together. 18 He is also head of the body, the church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything. 19 For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, 20 and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven.

4. I'm not sure if you noted in these readings that (headship) is not a shared Position

a. Jesus is the head....period!

C. Now, under the headship of Christ, there is one particular member that is charged with responsibility for the other members.

1. The elders of the flock

Hebrews 13:17

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

II. Let's look at how God defines the elders.

A. There are three terms in the New Testament that help us understand what an elder is.

Let's read 1 Peter 5:1-3

Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, 2 shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; 3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

a. Elder / Overseer / Shepherd all talking about the same person

1. The first word is "Presbuteros" in the Greek

a. Translated into English it is the word..... elder / or presbyter

b. But the meaning is difficult because the Greek word has multiple meanings and the scriptural context around this word is very limited.

c. According to the "Theological Dictionary of the New Testament" which is considered by far to be the most extensive study of the Greek that has ever been done, there are 3 possibilities for the meaning:

1) "Age" when talking about two people.

a) Example....Colton is my elder son

2) "Wisdom" that comes from age and experience

3) "Rank" of office

Note: The Theological Dictionary of the New Testament uses 30 pages to discuss this topic...complex !

d. 1 Timothy chapter 3:6 gives us the best insight to help define the word presbuteros when it says that an elder is not to be a new convert

1) The Wisdom that comes from age and experience seems to be the central thought in view here.

2) Now with this thought....how old is old enough or how young is too young?

a. There are lots of opinions on this matter

-But to assign a definite age goes beyond the scope of the written word.

- a. It seems to me that this word specifically refers to a man with enough life experience and spiritual maturity to help others in their walk toward heaven.

2. The second word is Episkopos in the Greek

- a. Translated into English it is the word bishop / overseer

Acts 20:28

28 "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

- b. An overseer is a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done.... and done right.

- 1) A curator
- 2) Guardian
- 3) Superintendent, planner, manager
- 4) Administrators?

1 Corinthians 12:27-28

27 Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it. 28 And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, various kinds of tongues.

- c. Overseers do have authority....talk about that in our next lesson more specifically.

3. Finally the word Poimen in the Greek

- a. In the English it is the word pastor / shepherd

- b. This word basically means keeper of the sheep.

- 1) Jewish shepherds were watchmen, guides, protectors and even companions to the flock

- 2) The word shepherd in it's verb form means "to tend"

- a) i.e. to care for

- c. Four main duties of a shepherd:

- 1) Shepherds are to feed the flock

Acts 20:28

*28 Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. **KJV***

- a. Remember the verb form of shepherd is to tend / feed
- b. But what are they to feed us?

Jeremiah 3:15

15 "Then I will give you shepherds after My own heart, who will feed you on knowledge and understanding.

*The truths of God from His word Titus 1:9

2) Shepherds are to lead the flock by example

1 Peter 5:3

3 nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

3) Shepherds are to watch out for flock

Hebrews 13:17

17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

4) Shepherds are to protect the flock

John 10:11-12

11 " I am the good shepherd; the good shepherd lays down His life for the sheep. 12 "He who is a hired hand, and not a shepherd, who is not the owner of the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep and flees, and the wolf snatches them and scatters them.

Acts 20:29-30

29 "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; 30 and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.

- d. ShepherdsFeed / Lead / Watch / Protect
- e. Not cowboys with bull whips...lording it over them, but gentle, yet able to be firm.

4. So by definition of these Greek words we see the elder to be:

- a. Elders
- b. Overseers
- c. Shepherds

Conclusion:

Thank God that we have had elders and currently have two.

The truth is that our vision for the future of the church is molded by God.

-And godly leaders help move us along in that direction.

-Along with this study of elders I would like to remind all of us that we can and should be godly leaders in our own circles of living.